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### ***published in***

Mapping the 'Forensic Turn'  
2017

### ***document version***

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

### ***citation for published version (APA)***

van der Laarse, R. (2017). Bones Never Lie: Unearthing Europe's Age of Terror in the Age of Memory. In Z. Dziuban (Ed.), *Mapping the 'Forensic Turn': Engagements with Materialities of Mass Death in Holocaust Studies and Beyond* (Vol. Band 5, pp. 143-168). (Beitrage des VWI zur Holocaustforschung; No. 5)..

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Rob van der Laarse

## Bones Never Lie?

### Unearthing Europe's Age of Terror in the Age of Memory

Held in the Polish town Oświęcim on 27 January 2015, the ceremony marking the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau was by far the most contested Second World War remembrance since the end of the Cold War. Of the some three hundred survivors and tens of presidents and royalties present, the most notable absentee was Vladimir Putin, the head of the state whose Soviet Red Army troops had liberated the camp in 1945.<sup>1</sup> This symbolic isolation of Russia was hardly less remarkable than the visit of a large delegation from the Israeli Knesset to “the valley of death of Auschwitz-Birkenau” on the invitation of the Polish government on Holocaust Memorial Day in 2014, “in what can be the biggest slap in the face anyone could ever give Hitler”.<sup>2</sup> How could the Holocaust paradigm be so bluntly used, abused and misused by (trans)national politics of memory and identity?

Auschwitz and the other former Nazi camps define the common ground of Western civilisation as monuments of Europe's twentieth century Age of Terror. Yet I will argue that the assumption of the Holocaust as a *common* European experience, and hence as a crucial component of Europe's post-war identity, raises some critical objections. First of all, the Holocaust paradigm is currently challenged by a deep incompatibility of opinions about the impact, interpretation and meaning of the persecution of Jews and other victims of Nazi terror; secondly, it is competed by the rise of a post-1989 occupation paradigm in Eastern Europe, one that equates Soviet terror and the occupation of former communist countries with Nazi crimes and genocide. Finally, the emergent forensic and material ‘turns’, which irrevocably transform the sites of the former camps, play a prominent, though complicated role in this dynamic of memory.

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1 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 27 January 2015, <http://70.auschwitz.org/index.php?lang=en> (9 November 2016).

2 Lea Speyer, Israeli Knesset Heads to Auschwitz for Holocaust Memorial Day, in: Breaking Israel News, 27 January 2015, <http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/10201/israeli-knesset-heads-auschwitz-holocaust-memorial-day/#RQJBQH4xBSJ1t3OA.97> (9 November 2016).

On many sites, archaeologists claim to be digging for truth and traces, but archaeology has never been an innocent discipline. Stones and bones played a pivotal role in twentieth-century nationalism and ideological war propaganda.<sup>3</sup> Transformed into material and forensic testimonies of ‘forgotten’ landscapes of terror and trauma, dead bodies became ‘proof’ of genocide not only for scientists and legal investigators, but also for generations of binary storytellers in a geopolitical context of competing narratives of victimhood. The parallels are traceable even between current memory activism and human rights discourses symbolically associating mass grave excavations or victim testimonies with the unearthing of hidden pasts, and the politics of populist crusaders questioning the Holocaust paradigm, or any other ‘public lie’, for the sake of other victims in endless number wars.

## Archaeology in the Era of Postmemory

In June 2013, during their excavations at the Sobibór extermination camp, the Israeli and Polish archaeologists Yoram Haimi and Wojciech Mazurek found two metres below the ground a tiny nametag bearing the name of David Jacob Zak. It had belonged to an eight-year-old Dutch boy who must have been wearing it when he was gassed and cremated there exactly 70 years before. David, or ‘Deddie’ as he was nicknamed, was born in Amsterdam’s Jewish neighbourhood and taken with his parents to the Jewish deportation site Hollandsche Schouwburg on 3 April 1943. From there, they were deported to the SS concentration camp Vught. On 6/7 June, all 1,300 children younger than 16 were separated from their parents and transported to the Jewish transit camp of Westerbork in two trains. The next day, on 8 June 1943, 3,017 people, including 1,147 children, were transported from there to Sobibór.

Sobibór served as one of three Nazi-German Aktion Reinhardt extermination camps. Around 250,000 people were murdered in its gas chambers from spring 1942 until the revolt of October 1943. After the escape of 365 prisoners, the Germans decided to demolish the camp and wipe out any traces of it by planting trees, thereby changing the extermination site into a peaceful forest that still exists today. Except for a long series of war crime trials, testimonies and oral history, no historical records of the camp exist. In the course of the past decade, however, forensic archaeology employing digital

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3 Russel Ó Riagáin/Cătălin Nicolae Popa (ed.), *Archaeology and the (De)Construction of National and Supra-National Polities*, in: *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 27 (2012) 2; for a more specific contribution to Nazi cultural politics, see Michael H. Kater, *Das ‘Ahnenerbe’ der SS 1935–1945. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches*, Stuttgart 1974; Heather Pringle, *The Masterplan. Himmler’s Scholars and the Holocaust*, New York 2006; Egon Schallmayer/Katharina von Kurzynski (ed.), *Archäologie und Politik, Archäologische Ausgrabungen der 30er und 40er Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts im zeitgeschichtlichen Kontext*, Wiesbaden 2011.

and non-invasive techniques to identify hidden material remains within former campscapes has become an important source of information about the structure of the former camp. In addition to this emergent role of truth-finding and crime scene investigation, it has also become a tool for representation and memorialisation.<sup>4</sup> Facing a future without survivors, archaeological findings offer a new bridge to the past, fostering a transnational identification with victims and a sense of belonging far beyond one's direct relatives.

In this sense, David Zak's nametag might be considered a material manifestation of what Marianne Hirsch has termed *postmemory*, which she describes as a transitory stage between personal, lived memory and mediated, cultural memory.<sup>5</sup> Although Hirsch uses the term mainly in reference to family photographs and stories from a second generation of children of Holocaust survivors, I would like to use it in a broader sense. Postmemory, for me, refers to a transitory stage of memory works, mnemonic artefacts and cultural representations signifying the rediscovery of forgotten memories in a post-conflict society, providing those who did not have direct experience of the events with a mediated access to the past.

Needless to say, testimonies, photography, film and exhibitions were crucial media already for the Allied 'liberations' of Nazi concentration camps in 1944/1945, especially when it came to communicating the magnitude of 'hidden' Nazi war crimes to those 'who did not know'. This postwar genocide narrative visualised war crimes through the lens of war photographers and filmmakers, with piles of dead bodies used for forced confrontations in US denazification campaigns such as those in Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen,<sup>6</sup> and staged exhibitions of human belongings and remains like the hundreds of shoes in the barracks of Majdanek and heaps of human hair in the large vitrines in the 1955 permanent exhibition at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. If these early visualisations and materialisations of mass murder were closely related to Raphael Lemkin's notion of genocide (1944) as applied to the Nuremberg tribunals on Nazi war crimes (1945/1946), today's dominant, individualised postmemorial gaze might be traced back to the media covered Israeli Eichmann trial (1960–1962). This was the first trial in which victims were admitted to testify in court against a perpetrator they had never actually met. This new agency attributed to formerly anonymous Holocaust victims – sharing their personal, traumatic camp experiences in a global, mediated court case – attracted huge attention among public intellectuals and a younger protest generation. As such, the Eichmann trial marked the emergence of the *Era of the Witness*, during which a growing

4 Caroline Sturdy Colls, *Holocaust Archaeologies. Approaches and Future Directions*, New York 2015.

5 Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, New York 2012.

6 Cora Sol Goldstein, *Capturing the German Eye. American Visual Propaganda in Occupied Germany*, Chicago/London 2009.

number of personal testimonies would travel from the courtroom to libraries, cinemas and TV screens as part of a worldwide Holocaust memory boom.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to the earlier narrative of magnitude, this victimhood-centred narrative has become dominant among postwar generations with only *indirect memories* of mass violence and Nazi war crimes. Starting with mediated testimonies, including Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* (1948) and the Auschwitz memoirs of Primo Levi (1956) and Elie Wiesel (1958), personal stories have become key to this emotional turn. Originally published in less widely-spoken languages such as Dutch, Italian and Yiddish, the repackaged Holocaust bestsellers paved the way for Hollywood blockbusters, including the 1980s American mini-series *Holocaust*, *Sophie's Choice* (1982) and Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993). In correspondence with the global human rights discourse, this "selling of the Holocaust"<sup>8</sup> also determined, to a large extent, how victims of mass violence were represented in a new kind of memorial museum.<sup>9</sup> Like Holocaust fiction, Holocaust museums mediatise victimhood by creating performative spaces for consuming the lessons of a painful past. Serving a combination of museum, educational and memorial purposes mostly for diasporic communities and tourist visitors far removed from the European terraces, they have developed a strong narrative for offering visitors an off-site Holocaust experience, using universal icons of victimhood to connect the contradictory tendencies of individualisation and globalisation. In employing post-memory tools such as family photos and portraits, letters and diaries, Holocaust museums create emotional bonds between victims and visitors. Such personal objects help visitors understand the magnitude of mass killings and enable them to identify with the dehumanised victims by giving them a name and a face when confronted with the intimacy of their earlier, pre-war family life.

When visiting extermination camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau or Treblinka, such discursive-material scripts signify an even more incomprehensible cruelty than the off-site constellations of urban memorial museums. Actually, because of the emotional interaction of visitors' spatial-historical experiences, these trauma site museums benefit from their indexical relation to the crime scene, as visitors literally walk in the victims' – and/or perpetrators' – footsteps.<sup>10</sup> This also applies to archaeological findings such as earrings, necklaces, bracelets, drinking cups, worn-out shoes with steel laces or hidden coins, hairpins, combs, homemade toys and spoons, or house keys found in still-traceable garbage dumps, cemeteries and crematoria, or in mass grave pits. Having changed

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7 Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, Ithaca/London 2006.

8 Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust. From Auschwitz to Schindler. How History is Bought, Packaged, and Sold*, New York 2000.

9 Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums. The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*, Oxford 2007.

10 Patrizia Violi, *Trauma Site Museums and Politics of Memory*, in: *Theory, Culture & Society* 29 (2012) 1, 36-75.

from rubbish into artefacts, such in situ displays of personal objects in museums allow visitors to figuratively touch the violently killed individuals who wore them. Tracing these belongings back to the original owners actually transforms them into the last signs of those who died anonymously thousands of kilometres from home at the unknown killing sites. More generally, it also turns archaeology itself into a performative act of cultural, if not political, signification.<sup>11</sup>

Because of this, findings like David Zak's nametag, or that of the six-year-old Lea de la Penha (another find by Haimi's team at Sobibór in 2011), serve as a contact point for survivor communities and postmemory visitors, enabling connection with a terrible and silenced past. Haimi called Lea's identification tag his most touching find at Sobibór and referred to her, in the Anne Frank tradition, as "the girl of Sobibór".<sup>12</sup> Yet the discovery of a third tag in late 2013, this time from twelve-year-old Amsterdam Jewish girl Annie Kapper, did not generate a great deal of publicity in the Dutch press. The reason might be that in the meantime a remarkable heritage conflict had arisen over the ownership of David Zak's identification tag: it was reclaimed by his 80-year-old niece Lies Caransa-de Hond, who recalled on Dutch television how 'Deddie' had protected her as a four-year-old child in April 1943, as the two had awaited deportation to Westerbork at the Amsterdam's Hollandsche Schouwburg. Lies Caransa-de Hond survived the war together with hundreds of other children smuggled out of the theatre and kept in safety. David's nametag appeared to her as an "angel from heaven", because after her return from hiding she "didn't have anything from him, just some photos".<sup>13</sup> Yet Polish law dictates that archaeological findings, including the excavated belongings of Dutch victims of former Nazi German concentrations camps, are considered national property and are not allowed to leave the country. Notwithstanding Dutch governmental support for David's family's moral claim that "it belongs not to Poland, but to us",<sup>14</sup> the Polish State Museum Majdanek, which supervises the Sobibór excavations, offered David's niece only a replica of the tag, much to her astonishment. The original, a photo of which is printed in Majdanek's latest museum guide, will become part of the permanent exhibition in the new museum planned at Sobibór.

Thus archaeological findings in a museum context may offer visitors both genocide-centred evidence of war crimes and victimhood-centred post-memory experiences.

11 Rob van der Laarse/Francesco Mazzucchelli/Carlos Reijnen (ed.), *Traces of Terror, Signs of Trauma*, Versus 119 (2014).

12 Aron Heller, Israeli Archaeologist, Seeking Truth About his Family, Digs into Nazi Death Camp, in: *The Times of Israel*, 22 August 2012, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-archaeologist-digs-into-nazi-death-camp/> (26 November 2016).

13 Liesje de Hond, interviewed at the Dutch website of Nederlandse Publieke Omroep (NPO) [Dutch Public Broadcasting], *Andere Tijden, Liesje en Deddie* [Different Times. Liesje and Deddie], in: NPO Geschiedenis, 2 May 2016, <http://www.npogeschiedenis.nl/nieuws/2016/april/Liesje-en-Deddie.html> (9 November 2016).

14 Ibid.

But outside of the museum context, the same object may return to its origin as a personal or family property, thereby changing into a highly contested *semiophore* – a thing with multiple meanings for different owners as a find, an artefact, and a memorial. In other words, while a curator might regard Deddie Zak's nametag as a postmemory tool for visitor's identification, a survivor might view its musealisation as a disgraceful act of appropriation, if not looting. Perhaps most importantly, this cultural property conflict over the Sobibór nametag makes clear that the current transnational Holocaust paradigm is not as hegemonic and universal as often thought. Indeed, while Holocaust narratives tend to become strongly *globalised*, the original crime scenes are still very much *localised*. In other words, while personal memories might travel, the sites themselves are mostly fixed within local and national canons of memory. Many material remnants and findings of conflicts are trapped in such a state of in-betweenness.

## Memory Dynamics: Camps and Numbers

Unlike nineteenth-century monuments to victorious battles and national heroes, twentieth-century war monuments mostly commemorate losses and victimhood. Changing from terrascapes in memoryscapes in particular Nazi concentration camps have come to function as such negative *lieux de mémoire* or counter-monuments of mass destruction.<sup>15</sup> Actually, this was not a unilateral process, but the outcome of several national, if not nationalist, dynamics of memory at play.<sup>16</sup> The first commemorations begun already with the development of camp memorials at the Allied Forces' command in the late 1940s on. Thus Allied-occupied Germany and Austria, as well as many Central-Eastern countries, saw camps such as Majdanek, Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald and Mauthausen musealised as a warning against fascism and (mostly in the 1960s) provided with impressive stone monuments of anti-fascist martyrdom and resistance. This kind of monumentalisation of former Nazi concentration camps was less common, however, in the former Nazi-occupied Western European countries. Although communists were perhaps more prominent in Western European than in Eastern European national resistance movements, they were silenced in postwar remembrance cultures. Fallen soldiers and partisans were honoured mainly at military cemeteries, and their names engraved at local monuments in their former residencies. Although the 'resis-

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15 See James E. Young, The Counter-Monument. Memory Against itself in Germany Today, in: Critical Inquiry 189 (1992) 2, 267-296; Zuzanna Dziuban, Countermonument in Europe. Spatial Politics of Artistic-Memory-Work, in: Mechthild Manus/Jonathan Vickery (ed.), The Art of the Multitude. Jochen Gerz – Participation and the European Experience, Frankfurt am Main 2016, 56-80.

16 See Frank van Vree/Rob van der Laarse (ed.), De Dynamiek van de herinnering. Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog in een internationale context [Dynamics of Memory. The Netherlands and the Second World War in International Context], Amsterdam 2009.

tance myths' of most post-war German-occupied countries cast entire nations as united in active and spiritual resistance against Hitler and their own collaborators, there was hardly space for commemorating the Holocaust.

Hence when, for instance, a Dutch delegation of Auschwitz survivors attended an international meeting of former Auschwitz prisoners in Oświęcim in 1952 and returned with a so-called Auschwitz urn filled with ashes collected from the lime pits of Birkenau, the urn could – precisely for being Jewish – be admitted neither to the national remembrance wall at the Amsterdam Dam (which hosted ashes from military cemeteries) nor to a Jewish cemetery, because the Jewish community was not convinced that it contained only Jewish ashes. Similarly, the Amsterdam mayor rejected a third proposal of the communist 'Poland travellers' to immure the urn in the Dokwerker monument near the Portuguese Synagogue – a monument that paid tribute to the Amsterdam February Strike against the first Nazi pogrom of 1941. The current Auschwitz monument holding the ashes is located in Wertheimpark and only dates to the 1990s.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike earlier, mostly Central- and Eastern European camp memorials, the majority of Western, Southern, and Northern European camps had no heroic monuments. Their 'rediscovery' as sites of memory and mourning begun only after decades of reuse and forgetting. The phenomenon can actually be compared to the *in-situ* re-memorialisation of the French and Belgian battlefields of the Great War.<sup>18</sup> Nowadays, former campsites all over Europe are turning into 'dark tourism' destinations: whereas older monuments are joined by new ones erected and equipped with artefacts, installations, texts, images, and even 3D-visualisations and soundscapes to make those sites accessible to younger generations for whom the Holocaust has changed from living memory into a dead history lesson.<sup>19</sup> As such, it is proper to consider these former terrortscapes from a transnational perspective as local key sites of a globalised Holocaust memory culture. However, the messages crucial for the majority of memorial camps still support the interests of national states. The way in which governments and citizens of European nations were,

17 Jewish victims were privately remembered in the synagogues and at the former cemeteries, though the Auschwitz urn was only permitted to be placed at an Amsterdam city cemetery before its renewed monumentalisation in the 1990s. At that time, its communist associations were gone. See Roel Hijink, *Voor-malige concentratiekampen. De monumentalisering van de Duitse kampen in Nederland* [Former Concentration Camps. Monumentalisation of the German Camps in the Netherlands], Hilversum 2011, 94-97; Rob van Ginkel, *Rondom de stilte. Herdenkingscultuur in Nederland* [About Silence. Memory Culture in the Netherlands], Amsterdam 2011, 279-288.

18 Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge 1995; Claus Leggewie, *Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung. Ein Schlachtfeld wird besichtigt*, Munich 2011.

19 See for instance Dean MacCannel, *The Ethics of Sight-Seeing*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 2011; Gregory Ashworth/Rudi Hartmann (ed.), *Horror and Human Tragedy Revisited. The Management of Sites of Atrocities for Tourism*, New York/Sidney/Tokyo 2005; Rob van der Laarse, *Tourism Conflicts and Conflict Tourism. Experiencing Heritage and Identity in Europe's Age of Crisis*, in: Linde Egberts (ed.), *Heritage and Tourism. Networks, Communities and the Digital Age*, Amsterdam (forthcoming).



and are, dealing with their conflicting pasts more often than not clashes with official European cultural policy and memory politics. It isn't just that the European landscape is filled with thousands of traces of twentieth-century mass violence that serve as tangible reminders of the "century of camps",<sup>20</sup> many of these sites are rendered contested or forgotten as a result of post-war border and regime changes, forced migration and, not least, political (mis)use for national, if not nationalist purposes. Used as screens for projecting myths about occupation, victimhood and resistance, it is sometimes difficult to find out who was victimised and made suffer by whom, whereas many of these sites have become the object of continuous number games.

One remarkable case is the Jasenovac camp in present-day Croatia, considered the most important Second World War memorial site in former Yugoslavia. This 'Auschwitz of the Balkans' looks like a beautiful park landscape, marked by Bogdan Bogdanović's impressive monument *Flower of Stone* (1966) that persistently testifies to Josip Broz Tito's policy of brotherhood and unity, and might be regarded a rare sign of Yugo-nostalgia in this 28<sup>th</sup> EU member state.<sup>21</sup> Like most other camps, Jasenovac was a complex of sub-camps including the notorious Stara Gradiška concentration camp, which spread over 200 square kilometres of land. After the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, management of the campscape was divided between the Jasenovac memorial site in Croatia and the Donja Gradina memorial space in *Republika Srpska*, the Serbian part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, separated by the river Sava and, since 2013, also by the border of the European Union. Thus, in case of Jasenovac, the topography of memory no longer corresponds to the former topography of terror. Rather, its current form represents the complex interconnected memorialisation of the Holocaust and the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. After all, it was after Tito's death in 1980 that old enmities returned. One tangible indicator was the creation of the Jasenovac travelling exhibition *The Dead Open the Eyes of the Living* (1986–1991), which showed many shocking photographs of mass graves and dead bodies for the first time. Because of its enormous emotional impact – exacerbated by years of silencing crimes committed by one ethnic group on another – this exhibition was held responsible for feeding a "what they did to us, we do to them" mentality among nationalist Serbs. Unsurprisingly, when Croats blew up Serbian monuments of the "Ustaša genocide"<sup>22</sup> in their 1991–1995 Homeland War, Serbian forces in the Yugoslav National Army

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20 Zygmunt Bauman, *A Century of Camps*, in: Peter Beilharz (ed.), *The Bauman Reader*, Oxford 2011, 275–276; Rob van der Laarse, *Nooit meer Auschwitz? Erfgoed van de oorlog na Europa's eeuw van de kampen* [Never Again Auschwitz? Heritage of the War and European Century of Camps], Inaugural Speech at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam [Free University of Amsterdam], 24 January 2012; Hooghalen: Herinneringscentrum Westerbork, 2013.

21 See also Rob van der Laarse, *Beyond Auschwitz? Europe's Terrrorscapes in the Age of Postmemory*, in: Silberman/Vatan, *Memory and Postwar*, 71–94.

22 See Michele Frucht Levy, *The Ustaša Genocide against Serbs, 1941–1945*, in: Marianne Neerland Soleim (ed.), *Prisoners of War and Forced Labour. Histories of War and Occupation*, Newcastle 2010, 35–45.

and Army of *Republika Srpska* immediately retaliated with a policy of urbicide, bombing Vukovar (1991) and soon commencing in Bosnia the siege of Sarajevo (1992–1996).<sup>23</sup>

The first post-war census of 1951 by Yugoslavia's Institute of Statistics estimated the total number of war dead in the country to be roughly one million, approximately 40 to 50 per cent of which would have been Serb. By 1964, this number was lowered to 346,740 Serbs – a figure also cited by the later Croat president Franjo Tuđman in 1989, when he, a trained historian, was still a political science professor in Zagreb. Bogoljub Kočović and Vladimir Žerjavić, in turn, later calculated that between 487,000 and 530,000 Serbs died during the Second World War,<sup>24</sup> responding to previous estimations from the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts that set the number of Jasenovac victims at more than 800,000.<sup>25</sup> When Croatia took over the Jasenovac memorial site from the rebellious Serb Republic of Krajina, the Tuđman regime immediately lowered Jasenovac's death toll to 30,000, while raising the victim count for the Allied internment camp Bleiburg in Austria by the same amount. It was there that Tito's partisans indiscriminately massacred Ustaša militants and refugees after receiving command of the camp from the British in 1945. In the 1990s, Bleiburg became the national memorial shrine of independent Croatia – a place where Croat families would travel to mourn, equipped with Ustaša flags and signs.<sup>26</sup> Although the significance of Bleiburg has not diminished over time, more moderate post-Tuđman governments have also restored Jasenovac's role as a national memorial site in response to American, Israeli and European critique of what was considered Holocaust revisionism. This dual Holocaust and national remembrance policy happened within the context of adapting a policy of European rapprochement awarded with Croatia's full membership in 2013.<sup>27</sup>

23 See Martin Coward, *Urbicide. The Politics of Urban Destruction*, Oxon/New York 2008; Francesco Mazzucchelli, *Urbicidio. Il senso dei luoghi tra costruzioni e ricostruzioni nella ex Jugoslavia* [Urbicide. The Sense of Places Between Destructions and Reconstructions in Former Yugoslavia], Bologna 2010.

24 James J. Sadkovich, *Forging Consensus. How Franjo Tuđman Became an Authoritarian Nationalist*, in: *Review of Croatian History* 6 (2010) 1, 7–35, here 11–12.

25 Serbian Academy of Science and Art, 1986.

26 Jasenovac and Bleiburg also share a connection as the prison complex Stara Gradiška, which was in 1945 one of the last stations of the 'ways of the cross', the forced marshes of Ustaša, Chetniks, Nazis and Fascists over the mountains to Yugoslav internment camps; Jasenovac Concentration Camp Memorials: Stare Gradiška, Jasenovac Memorial Site, <http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6751> (11 December 2016).

27 Sven Milekic, *Croatian President Mourns at Controversial WWII Memorial*, in: *Balkan Transitional Justice*, 15 May 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/croatian-president-visits-bleiburg-ww2-memorial-in-secret> (23 July 2015). In contrast to the Croatian president, the social democrat prime minister Zoran Milanović attended in 2015 the official commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Jasenovac, and after a storm of critique the government, promised again to make an end to the appearance of Nazi symbols in Bleiburg, because of its inflicted damage "on the reputation of Croatian citizens and their homeland all over the world"; Dusan Stojanovic/Barko Bandic, *Far-Right Surges in Croatia as EU Disappointment Spreads*, in: *CNSNews.com*, 23 June 2015; <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/far-right-surges-croatia-eu-disappointment-spreads> (16 August 2017).

In the meantime, the Jasenovac memorial site has been restored, and in 2006 it reopened as what could be regarded Croatia's Holocaust museum. Since then, its permanent exhibition reflects a postmemory frame of presenting facts, images, and personal belongings and stories. Rather than stoke new hatred with images of dead bodies and moving beyond the focus on an anonymous mass reduced to the collective notion of victims, the museum shows portrait photos and evokes personal and family names of "individuals whom you can look in the eyes". In order to prevent a spiral in which "victims of one war crime [might] be [again] utilised to incite another",<sup>28</sup> the new museum thus imported a successful Western museological model of Holocaust representation, and it received international prizes for its design and educational projects. One could nevertheless argue that, in facilitating visitor identification, such postmemory tools also become highly contested in a post-conflict society, where every story can potentially be distrusted as myth. Unsurprisingly, the museum staff adheres to a strict policy of fact-finding: a glass construction in the museum hall lists the "names of the 69,842 verified victims so far", referring to estimations from 2006,<sup>29</sup> whereas at this moment the possibility of a maximum number of 100,000 is communicated on the FAQ page of Jasenovac's official Memorial website. The 83,145 registered victims are listed according to nationality, including almost 48,000 Serbs, 16,000 Roma and around 13,000 Jews.<sup>30</sup> However, all these figures are far below the numbers cited by the current Serbian government, according to which between 500,000 and 600,000 people died at Jasenovac, or the Jasenovac Victims List of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum revised in 2005/2006, which mentions 647,000 deaths.<sup>31</sup> A number of 700,000 is propagated at the Donja Gradina memorial site in Republika Srpska, on the other side of the Sava river. The discrepancy shows, in a nutshell, the poisoning combination of fragmentation, trivialisation and relativisation of war crimes produced by the explosive creation of new states from the former Yugoslavia, all of which are nationalising, narrowing, ordering and purifying their ethnicised memory cultures.<sup>32</sup>

Whereas Western trauma site museums such as Sachsenhausen or Buchenwald use (or claim to use) exhibitions to challenge competing antifascist and national(ist) narra-

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28 Nataša Jovičić, Jasenovac Memorial Museum's Permanent Exhibition – The Victim as an Individual, in: Croatian Institute of History 2 (2006) 1, 295–299, here 297.

29 See Dorde Mihovilović/Jelke Smreka, About the List of Individual Victims of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp. According to Information and Verified to Date, in: Tea Benčić Rimay (ed.), Jasenovac Memorial Site, Jasenovac 2006, 218–219.

30 Poimenicni Popis Zrtava KCL Jasenovac 1941–1945 [The List of Individual Victims of Jasenovac Concentration Camp], <http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6284>, and <http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=7619> (6 March 2013).

31 Jasenovac Victims List (ID: 35701), USHMM Holocaust Survivors and Victims Database, [http://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source\\_view.php?SourceId=35701](http://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source_view.php?SourceId=35701) (20 July 2015).

32 Orli Fridman, Alternative Calendars and Memory Work in Serbia. Anti-war Activism after Milošević, in: Memory Studies 82 (2015) 2, 212–226, here 214.

tives by integrating new visitor groups within the EU framework of shared values, the Jasenovac memorial museum has not been very successful in bridging the gap between former victims and new visitor groups. This, in my view, is not only due to a dehistorisation of the genocidal past, but also, paradoxically, to the museum's desire to establish clear, indisputable facts as an answer to decades of ideological manipulation. In other words, the mechanisms of postmemory are used to silence traumatic memories in the interest of reconciliation. Confronted with the question of how to present 'the trauma of Jasenovac' in a scholarly, cultural context, thereby preventing new ethnic hatred among rival victim groups, the museum opts to seek the historical truth in the individualisation of victims rather than present forensic evidence of mass killings in situ at the crime scene, or, more importantly, address its own role in the former Yugoslav memory politics and during the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s.<sup>33</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Jasenovac Memorial Site lost contact with its heritage communities, as Croatian inhabitants are not necessarily interested in dead Serbs, whereas Serbs – and the international Jewish community – feel betrayed by the lowered number of 'their' victims and the decision of museum staff to remove antifascist icons and evidence of violence from the exhibition, including the cruel Ustaša knives. In the present context of a political subdividing of former Yugoslavia into a potentially explosive constellation of ethnically defined communities in and outside the European Union, this feeds the impression of Jasenovac – a site used to support Croatia's entry to the EU – as a recent victim of Serbian aggression that neglects Serbia's traumatic past (as a former victim of Ustaša aggression), under the false impression that victims cannot simultaneously be perpetrators. Taken together, this clearly shows that in situ memorial camps call for different museological approaches than off-site memorial museums.<sup>34</sup>

As noticed above, the revisions of numbers seem to characterise many former Nazi and fascist camp memorials in Eastern European countries in the wake of 1989, where most camp administrations and transport lists were destroyed by the Nazis in or after the war. In the condition of uncertainty as to the actual number of victims, this often implies significant rewriting of figures exaggerated for propaganda purposes in the early postwar years. This applies even to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where part of the administration survived, and many (registered) Western European Jews had already been exterminated by the spring of 1944. It was at that time that around 425,000 Hungarian Jews, deported at Eichmann's command, were brought to the camp and (for the most part) gassed upon

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33 Nataša Mataušić, *Jasenovac 1941–1945*, *Jasenovac* 2003, 5–6 and 70.

34 See Sarah Farmer, *Symbols That Face Two Ways. Commemorating the Victims of Nazism and Stalinism at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen*, in: *Representations* (1995) 49, 97–119, here 115; Van der Laarse, 'Ils nous l'ont fait.' *Muséographie des mémoires concurrents après 1989* [They Did it to Us. *Museography of Competing Memories after 1989*], in: Delphine Bechtel/Luba Jurgenson/Catherine Goussef (ed.), *Muséographie des violences en Europe centrale et ex-URSS* [*Museography of Violences in Central Europe and the Former URSS*], Paris 2016, 213–232.7 (forthcoming).

arrival. Those people made up more than half of the Jews killed at this largest Nazi mass murder site. In 1992, the Auschwitz-Birkenau death toll was lowered from 4.1 million (the original Soviet estimate) to 1.1 to 1.35 million Jewish victims (of a total 1.5 million deaths).<sup>35</sup>

Numbers also play a role in designing camp memorials. While, as we saw, older Eastern European representations of the Holocaust showed the magnitude of Nazi war crimes by exhibiting shoes, belongings, and human remains, a number of commissioned monumental sculptures from the 1960s – among them Jasenovac's *Stone Flower* or the equally impressive *Stones of Treblinka* – have also been erected at the former camp sites to express the scale of the crimes. An illustrative case is the Majdanek concentration camp in Lublin, originally a forced labour camp that was temporarily caught in 1942–1943 within the framework of Aktion Reinhardt. As the first Nazi concentration camp liberated by the Red Army in July 1944, Majdanek was briefly on par with Auschwitz in the 'death camp hierarchy'. But here, too, the figures began to shift: from 1.5 million in the first post-war period to 350,000 with the 1960 release of a new Soviet documentary film about the camp,<sup>36</sup> whereas nowadays the number of victims is estimated at 78,000 – 59,000 of them Jewish.<sup>37</sup> To contemplate the scale of the Nazi crimes and commemorate the dead, a huge *Monument of Struggle and Martyrdom* was erected at the entrance to the site, leading to an impressive, large concrete mausoleum. Designed in 1969 by Wiktor Tolkin, the mausoleum takes the form of a dome covering an enormous mound of 1,300 cubic metres of soil mixed with the ashes and bones of murdered Jews.<sup>38</sup> The higher estimates of the early post-war period were based first and foremost on the discovery of 820,000 pairs of shoes and insoles collected by the Nazis, together with other possessions stolen from Jews of Lublin, at all three Reinhardt camps: valuables, clothing, golden teeth and human hair. Besides Auschwitz, this former camp still offers the most complete picture of the early stage of Jewish extermination via material remains: gas chambers (though some of them might only have been used to delouse cloths), mass graves in the nearby Krepiec forest, as well as seven crematoria and an earlier roast used to burn the corpses of the 18,000 Jews killed during *Aktion Erntefest* (Operation Harvest Festival) on 3 and 4 November 1943, the largest mass execution in a Nazi concentration camp and the effective end of Aktion Reinhardt.<sup>39</sup>

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35 Franciszek Piper, 'The number of Victims', in: Yisrael Gutman/Michael Berenbaum (ed.) *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, Bloomington 1994, 61–76, here 71/72; Piper estimates also that some 75,000 Poles, 21,000 Sinti and Roma, 15,000 Russian POWs, and 15,000 other groups died at the camp, whereas the total number of Hungarian-Jewish victims was 565,000.

36 Alexander Werth, *Russia at War 1941–1945*, New York 1984, 889–898.

37 Tomasz Kranz, *The Extermination of Jews at Majdanek Concentration Camp*, Lublin 2010, 30, 63 and 70–76.

38 Kowalczyk-Nowak, *Majdanek*, 16–17.

39 Kranz, *The Extermination*, 25, 34, 63–69 and 77; Beata Siwek-Ciupak, *Majdanek. A Historical Outline*, Lublin 2014, 30–34.

In much the same way, the Belzec figure was lowered as early as 1947 from 1.8 million victims to 600,000, while the number since the 1990s is set at 430,000 to 500,000, which is also the figure quoted in the site museum established in 2004.<sup>40</sup> Close to the estimations provided in the so-called Höfle Telegram,<sup>41</sup> this number is also supported by the outcomes of archaeological investigations carried out before the redesign of the memorial site.<sup>42</sup> Nowadays, Belzec resembles a black, volcanic deathscape representing 33 located mass graves filled with ashes (some also containing unburned and mummified bodies), cut in half by a pathway leading from a symbolic railway platform to a memorial wall situated, perhaps, where the gas chambers were once located. Similar to Sobibór, where no camp administration has been found, and – in contrast to the aforementioned 34,313 Dutch Jews (a number based on civil administrations and the listing of train transports)<sup>43</sup> – most Eastern European victims were not registered by name and their number of deaths is still debated, with estimates ranging from 170,000 to 300,000.<sup>44</sup> Here, too, a planned monumental redesign will accentuate the former pathway, the so-called *Himmelfahrtsstraße* leading to recently discovered gas chambers and the adjoining cemetery, with mass graves and ashes marked by a symbolic monumental dome erected in the 1960s. It is only for the former extermination camp Treblinka II – whose field of ashes has been transformed into a symbolic cemetery and covered in 1964 with 17,000 stones symbolising the lost shtetls – that the historical figure of 700,000 to 900,000 victims still holds, mostly because of the remaining transport lists of the German *Fahrplanordnung* of 25 August 1942.<sup>45</sup>

40 Robert Kuwalek, *Das Vernichtungslager Belzec*, Berlin 2013, 237–246.

41 Hermann Höfle was the coordinator of Aktion Reinhardt, whose telegram in Enigma code to Eichmann was intercepted by the British, and presents the numbers listed for Lublin/Majdanek, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka to the end of 1942; Public Record Office, Kew, England, HW 16/23, decode GPDD 355a, distributed on 15 January 1943, radio telegrams no's 12 and 13/15, transmitted on 11 January 1943 (rediscovered in 2001).

42 The 1997–2000 investigations were directed by Andrzej Kola.

43 The Dutch number of deportees is based on the Westerbork administration, which are now accessible as the Red Cross Archive; for the figures also for other countries based on European Jewish transports, see Jules Schelvis, *Vernietigingskamp Sobibor* [Extermination Camp Sobibor], Amsterdam 2008], 232–267.

44 The first number is based on the figures in the Höfle-telegram which lists a total number of 1.27 million Jews killed in Operation Reinhardt camps up to 31 December 1942, of which 101,370 in Sobibór, to which might be added the 68,795 Jews already known to be killed between 1 January 1943 and the Uprising of 14 October; see Peter Witte/Stephen Tyas, *A New Document on the Deportation and Murder of Jews during 'Einsatz Reinhardt' 1942*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14 (2001) 3, 468–486. The former director of Sobibór museum, Marek Bem insists on 300,000 or more in his publications, but in a post-mortem publication from 2014, Robert Kuwalek revisited the numbers of victims of Sobibór again and set them at around 170,000–180,000; Robert Kuwalek, *Nowe ustalenia dotyczące liczby ofiar niemieckiego obozu zagłady w Sobiborze* [New Estimations Regarding the Number of Victims of German Extermination Camp in Sobibór], in: *Zeszyty Majdanka* (2014) 26, 17–60.

45 *Fahrplanordnung* Generaldirektion der Ostbahn, Krakau 25 Agu. [August] 1942, Bundesarchiv. Bild 183-C0509-0049-012.

## Competing Memories: Truth-finding and Myth-making

No less remarkable than Putin's aforementioned absence at the Auschwitz commemoration 70 years after the end of the Second World War was the prominent presence on that day of Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko, who claimed that not the Russians but Ukrainians had liberated the camp. Western governments and Jewish organisations had criticised Ukraine for a particular kind of Holocaust denial since its national independence in 1991, as its policy of one Ukrainian identity was, and still is, built on the competing Holodomor myth concerning Stalin's 1932–1933 so-called Ukrainian genocide. Yet in the context of the present-day conflicts in Ukraine, its self-proclaimed status as a victim nation has won in credibility. What we are witnessing in Ukraine today is doubtlessly one of the most severe military crises on the European continent since the Yugoslav Wars. The international confrontation after the annexation of Crimea and the Ukrainian civil war, unfolding in the context of the refugee crisis, the Syrian war and Kurdish-Turkish conflict, is even more far-stretching than the wars of the 1990s and the 2001 'war on terror', with a much more self-secured Russia as opponent.

In fact, the unusual call for military intervention in the Balkans 20 years ago, framed in Western Europe and the United States from the perspective of Nazi atrocities, signalled the emergence of the Holocaust's symbolic role as the paradigmatic genocide. Responding to the circulation of iconic images of the 1992 Omarska concentration camp and the Prijedor (1992) and Srebrenica (1995) massacres, the recognition of the Holocaust and all other genocides, the prosecution of racism, ethnic cleansing and Holocaust denial became constitutive for the European politics of memory. If the European project seemed complete and history drawn to its close in the wake of the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, in particular the worldwide shock of Srebrenica made manifest that terror was not banned from European space. This first post-war European genocide functioned as a wake-up call to embrace human rights policy, which has since then been held as pivotal to the core values of the EU. With the 2000 *Stockholm Declaration on the Holocaust*, 44 state leaders recognised Holocaust education, remembrance and research as a way to prevent the return of war and terror on the European continent. The recognition of Auschwitz and a common painful past has come to serve as a ticket to the European "community of values",<sup>46</sup> for new member states and individual citizens alike.

The Srebrenica massacre also triggered the forensic turn in Holocaust memory. Efforts put into crime scene investigation in Bosnia inspired French priest Patrick Desbois to start his long series of *Holocaust by Bullets* expeditions to massacre sites in

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46 UC Fundamental Rights Agency, *The European Community as a Community of Values. Safeguarding Fundamental Rights in Times of Crisis*, Vienna 2013.



Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania.<sup>47</sup> Under the impact of Srebrenica, memory activists, forensic archaeologists and scholars have likewise embraced the 'killing fields narrative' in Spain, not only by framing Franco's legacy as the *Spanish Holocaust*, but also by commencing exhumation of Civil War mass graves.<sup>48</sup> The transitional justice narratives of the disappeared have even travelled virtually from Argentina to Holocaust spaces of memory and back, via the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia.<sup>49</sup>

In retrospect, the Stockholm Declaration appeared to provide a moment of clarity founded on the paradigmatic meaning of Auschwitz, and the newly united, humanistic and peaceful Europe – which reached its climax with the 2012 awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize for the EU's contributions to the advancement of peace and reconciliation between France and Germany, for democracy and human rights in Southern European countries, for defeating the division between East and West, for settling many ethnically-based conflicts, and the strengthening of reconciliation in the Balkans.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, the events of 11 September 2001, the eastwards enlargement of the EU from twelve to 28 countries between 2004 and 2013, the 2009 Euro crisis, and the 2016 Brexit referendum have all fundamentally challenged the idea of a "Holocaust-centred European mnemonic community".<sup>51</sup> United behind the 2008 Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism, Central and Eastern European countries are requesting the persecution of communist crimes (*ipso facto* Stalinist terror and Soviet camp systems) on terms equal to that of Nazi crimes and genocide. And in this, they have been officially supported by the EU parliament since 2009. Yet the wars and mass terror that characterised half of the twentieth century (and directly address the future of Europe's *lieux de mémoire* of the totalitarian past) are all but uncontested. This is best reflected at the sites of the former camps, not so much (or not only) because of their vulnerable materiality, but also on account of their layered, conflicted history, where consecutive internments of prisoners by occupying powers and ruling regimes transformed victims of the one into persecutors of the other. Moreover, Holocaust memorial camps in many

47 Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets. A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*, New York 2008.

48 Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust. Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*, London 2013; Giles Tremlett, *Ghosts of Spain. Travels through a Country's Hidden Past*, London 2006; Paloma Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia. The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*, New York/Oxford 2002; Marije Hristova-Dijkstra, *Reimagining Spain. Transnational Entanglements and Remembrance of the Spanish Civil War since 1989*, PhD Thesis, Maastricht 2016.

49 See Adam Rosenblatt, *Digging for the Disappeared. Forensic Science after Atrocity*, Stanford 2015. Rosenblatt considers the "politics of mass graves" as a human rights movement, though under the post-memory notion of caring for the dead.

50 The Official Web Site of the Nobel Prize, [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/press.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/press.html) (9 November 2016).

51 Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory. History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz*, Ohio 2006, 331.



post-communist countries are now competing with Red Terror and Gulag memorials (including KGB prisons with a Gestapo origin) as the prime memorials of these new, independent nations.

Given the EU expansion to the East, we may expect a paradigm shift in Europe's memory culture, shaped by the experience of the wartime and post-war Soviet occupations of Poland and other Central and Eastern European states, some of which are now EU member states. Yet, instead of a more inclusive, multidirectional widening of the Holocaust paradigm, the focus on the legacy of Stalinist era is often translated into a 'double genocide paradigm' and mobilised for nationalist purposes by political elites, fostering unexpected Holocaust dissonances<sup>52</sup> that currently tie in with Western European (and American) right-wing populism, and even with Holocaust revisionism. The present-day re-ethnicisation of national memory is also evident in the ways in which wartime heroes are being used in national politics of identity, which seem particularly powerful under the condition of ethnically-based national conflicts flaring up in Europe's borderlands with former Soviet member states like Ukraine. Paradoxically, whereas Russia and its allies in the Balkans and Eastern Ukraine are being accused of ethnonationalism, they themselves warn of fascism. Thus, in 2016 the Belgrade chairman of the Serbian parliament, Meho Omerović, went as far as to accuse Croatia of "a complete rehabilitation of the Ustasha movement". In his plea urging EU politicians to respond to the erection of a monument to a terrorist and murderer (Miro Barešić) in a member state, Omerović appealed to fundamental values of the Union and the fact that it "is based on anti-fascism".<sup>53</sup>

Clearly, the European continent is not only strewn with numerous newly discovered terrascapes, but many in the former state socialist countries do not seem to be willing to handle their traumatic war and postwar experiences in terms of the Holocaust master narrative, especially when it collides with the resurgence of nationalist narratives of the past. The nationalisation of victimhood could be seen as the reason why most Ukrainians do not identify with the 33,771 Jewish victims of 1941 Babi Yar massacre, probably the largest single shooting mass killing of the Holocaust – hardly revealed in the current memorial park in Kiev's *Ravine of Oblivion*, where most monuments commemorate supposed non-Jewish victims of Nazi terror (such as 621 Ukrainian nationalists and two Orthodox priests).<sup>54</sup> Like the Ustaša leader in Croatia whose monument caused such

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52 Rob van der Laarse, *Archaeology of Memory. Europe's Holocaust Dissonances in East and West*, in: Dirk Callebaut, Jan Mařík/Jana Maříková-Kubková (ed.), *Heritage Reinvents Europe*, Ename 2013, 121-133, here 126-128.

53 Croatia Rehabilitating Ustaša Movement, in: *Inserbia*, 2 August 2016, <https://inserbia.info/today/2016/08/croatia-rehabilitating-ustasha-movement/> (9 November 2016).

54 Karel C. Berkhoff, *Babi Yar. Site of Mass Murder, Ravine of Oblivion*, J.B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Annual Lecture at UHMM, 9 February 2011. It is estimated that in Babi Yar Germans killed 100,000 people (of which 60,000 Jews). The ravine was turned into a memorial park in 1976 with a monument commemorat-

uproar in Serbia, anti-communist partisan leader Stepan Bandera (killed by the KGB after the war) was posthumously proclaimed a national hero in Ukraine. ‘Rediscovered’ during the Orange Revolution of 2010, many embraced him as a political symbol during the Maidan revolt in 2014: a number of demonstrators carried his portrait on their chests. Bandera monuments are being erected throughout Western Ukraine, and he is even the focus of newly-opened Bandera museums.<sup>55</sup> Yet Bandera is considered a war criminal in Russia, Poland and Israel for his support of ethnic cleansing operations during the German occupation. Notwithstanding the official veteran status of its last surviving members, Bandera’s militant section of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B) was, according to Polish researchers, responsible for the death of 40,000 to 60,000 Poles during the 1942/1943 Volhynia massacres,<sup>56</sup> and forced 450,000 others to flee from the region – another painful chapter in Polish-Ukrainian-Jewish history that could easily result in new memory conflicts.

Remarkably enough, the long European-Russian thaw from 1989 to 2010 also helped improve Polish-Ukrainian relations, and in 2015 a Ukrainian-Polish historical committee was installed to investigate the Volhynia massacre crimes, whereas Poland seemed to support Ukraine against Russian aggression in the Crimean crisis, and in its troubles in the eastern part of the country. Still, the wounds of the past are not yet healed. In July 2016, the Polish parliament voted anonymously for a Senate’s resolution to acknowledge Volhyn as “a genocide by Ukrainian nationalists against the Second Polish Republic”, and declared 11 July the National Day of Remembrance.<sup>57</sup> Ukraine almost immediately responded to the Polish remembrance day and provocatively renamed *Moskovsky Pros-*

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ing the citizens of Kiev and Soviet POWs killed between 1941–1943, without mentioning the Jews. Unlike a monument for 621 OUN members and two priests killed at Babi Yar by the Nazis, the Menorah monument added after independence in 1991 is vandalised since 2006 several times a year, whereas a museum is still debated. Julie Masis, Ukraine Plans Museum to Commemorate Babi Yar, in: The Jewish Chronicle Online, 7 January 2016, <http://www.thejc.com/news/world-news/152024/ukraine-plans-museum-commemorate-babi-yar> (9 November 2016).

55 On the post-1991 Bandera’s museums and monuments, see Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera. The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist. Fascism, Genocide, and Cult*, Stuttgart 2014, 480–499.

56 See Timothy Snyder, *The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing 1943*, in: *Past and Present* (2003) 179, 197–234. On Volhynia, see Polish Institute of National Remembrance [IPN], 1943 Volhynia Massacre. Truth and Remembrance, <http://www.volhyniamassacre.eu/?a=4639> (9 November 2016). In his article, Snyder remarks that the Volhynia massacre forced Stalin in 1944 to let the NKVD and Red Army separate Poles and Ukraine forever by dividing them among two states, after which in Ukraine received Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in 1947.

57 Senate of Poland Voted for Recognizing Volyn 1940 Massacre as a Genocide, in: 112UA, 8 July 2016, <http://112.international/politics/senate-of-poland-voted-for-recognizing-volyn-1940-massacre-as-a-genocide-6841.html> (9 November 2016); Polish Sejm Voted for a Resolution to Recognise Volyn Tragedy a Genocide, in: 112UA, 22 July 2016, <http://112.international/politics/polish-sejm-voted-for-a-resolution-to-recognize-volyn-tragedy-a-genocide-7462.html> (9 November 2016). On 15 July 2013, on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Volyn massacre, the Polish Sejm already adopted a resolution stating that crimes committed by OUN and UPA were of “the nature of ethnic cleansing with signs of genocide”, and specified the numbers of Poles killed in Volyn and Eastern Galicia 1942–1945 to be around 100,000.

*pekt* (Moscow Avenue) in Kiev *Prospekt Stepan Bandera*.<sup>58</sup> Ukraine's nationalist parties furiously responded by calling the Polish "post-colonial" resolution "a stab in the back"; The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (UINR) spoke of a "growing anti-Ukrainian hysteria [...] provoked by political forces"; Ukraine's ambassador in Poland suggested a Russian Secret Service plot; the Ukrainian parliament sent a strong message by passing a bill "on the genocide committed by the Polish state against Ukrainians in the years 1919–1951"; finally, a group of politicians and intellectuals called on the parliament to establish not one, but three remembrance days for Ukrainian victims of Polish crimes.<sup>59</sup>

A few months later, Wojciech Smarzowski's long-awaited film *Wolyn* (2016) about the Volhynia massacre suddenly revealed the silenced truth of "Ukrainian cruelty" directed against the Poles – portrayed from a Polish bottom-up perspective as a ruthless orgy of violence.<sup>60</sup> Plans for a Ukrainian release had to be postponed, as the script completely violates the authorised (thus political, and legal) view of Ukrainian historians that Volhynia was basically a non-political 'peasant fury' against oppressive Polish (if not Jewish) elites, and not at all a long-lasting campaign of political violence inspired or controlled by Bandera's OUN. Considering the judgment of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance after consulting its Ukrainian colleagues, there seems to be no space for academic consensus anymore: "All this is in line with the pro-Bandera propaganda put forward during the last stages of the Second World War and successfully promoted after the war by émigré Ukrainian nationalist historians associated with OUN-B."<sup>61</sup>

58 See Rob van der Laarse, Who owns the Crimean past? Conflicted Heritage and Ukrainian Identities, in: Dirk Callebaut (ed.), *A Critical Biographic Approach of Europe's Past*, Ename 2016, 15–52, here 39.

59 Mikhail Klikushin, From Friends to Bitter Rivals. Poland and Ukraine Accuse Each Other of 'Genocide', New York Observer, 1 September 2016, <http://observer.com/2016/09/from-friends-to-bitter-rivals-poland-and-ukraine-accuse-each-other-of-genocide/>. Ukraine recognised the Volyn tragedy, though only accepts a death toll of 8,000 to 30,000, and violence from both sides, even though the August 25 petition on the establishment of three anti-Polish remembrances nonetheless still calls for "the natural alliance of Ukraine and Poland in the fight against their eternal common enemy Poland".

60 Stanisław Srokowski, To będzie wielki wstrząs, który odklamie historię [This Will Be a Major Shock that Will Put History Straight], in: *wPolityce.pl* [In Politics], 11 March 2015, <http://wpolityce.pl/kultura/236837-stanislaw-srokowski-o-filmie-wolyn-to-bedzie-wielki-wstrzas-ktory-odklamie-historie> (9 November 2016); and compare the Ukrainian response, Igor Ignatiev, Upcoming Polish film about the Volyn Massacre is Already Stirring Controversy, in: *The New Cold War*, 20 July 2015, <https://www.newcoldwar.org/upcoming-polish-film-about-the-volyn-massacre-is-already-stirring-controversy/> (9 November 2016). Smarzowski's movie follows Srokowski's bloody novel *Nienawiść* (Hate, 2015), and shares its narrative with Tadeusz Piotrowski (ed.), *Genocide and Rescue in Wolyn. Recollections of the Ukrainian Nationalist Ethnic Cleansing Campaign Against the Poles during World War II*, London 2008.

61 IPN, History. 1943 Volhynia Massacre. Truth and Remembrance, <http://www.volhyniamassacre.eu/?a=4639> (9 November 2016). The Institute rightly noticed that the historical conflicts on the Polish and Ukrainian Volhynia interpretation "have become an element of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict of memory", <http://www.volhyniamassacre.eu/spory-o-wolyn> (9 November 2016). See also John-Paul Himka, Interventions. Challenging the Myths of Twentieth-Century Ukrainian History, in: Alexei Miller/Maria Lipman (ed.), *The Convolutions of Historical Politics*, Budapest/New York 2013, 211–238. For the complex relationship of Ukrainian and Jewish memory, see Delphine Bechtel, *Ukrainian Identity in Lviv*

At the same time, on 28 September 2016, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, in an address to the Ukrainian parliament at an event marking the 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Babi Yar, openly accused Bandera's OUN of cooperating with the German SS in murdering the Kiev Jews. The current OUN deputy chairman Bohdan Chervak could only furiously respond that Rivlin must have watched too much Russian TV, which "is not just bad, but embarrassing". Vladimir Vyatrovich, chairman of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrances, simply denied any OUN involvement in the Holocaust and noted that "honouring the memory of victims of Babi Yar would be more sincere without employing the myths of those who erased their memory". The politicians even demanded public support from the Ukrainian Jews to strengthen their case. Still, 29 Jewish communities and organisations responded with a public letter against the UINRs "attempts to rewrite history, suppression and denial of anti-Semitic ideology and practices", which they took as "an insult to the memory of over one million Jews murdered in the Ukraine by the Nazis and local collaborators, and, moreover, [a case of] Holocaust denial".<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, politics are at stake with every fact, and every conflict is haunted by the ghosts of the dead. So what about truth-finding? Archaeologists may dig for bullets and historians for documents, but we will never be absolutely certain about the number of victims in the wake of Stalin's Great Terror,<sup>63</sup> the Nazi bullet Holocaust, the NKVD prison massacres or the Nazi massacres of Soviet prisoners of war in 1941.<sup>64</sup> Actually, more than with the victims of Babi Yar or the Soviet POWs (many of whom were Ukrainian), many Ukrainians nowadays identify with the victims of the Vinnytsia massacre, killed by the Soviet Secret Police (NKVD) during Stalin's Great Purge of 1937/1938 (9,400 deaths), and during the 1941 NKVD prison massacres. Interestingly, the forensic evidence of those crimes had been used in Nazi war propaganda as early as 1943, as a proof of Judeo-Bolshevik violence against the Ukrainian people. According to Soviet documents released after 1991, the prison massacres had a death toll of 8,789 in Ukraine, and claimed some 20,000 to 30,000 lives in Eastern Poland (now also Ukraine).<sup>65</sup> Anti-Russian

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(Lemberg/Lwów/Lvov). From the Habsburg Myth to Banderstadt?, in: Rob Van der Laarse et al. (ed.), *Religion, State, Society and Identity in Transition Ukraine*, Oisterwijk 2015, 181-202.

62 Israel Against the OUN. New Scandal Babi Yar, in: *Mega News*, 28 September 2016, <http://www.meganewsweb.com/en/news/breaking-news-izrail-protiv-oun-novyj-skandal-s-babem-jarom> (9 November 2016). It is however necessary to differentiate between Bandera's OUN-B, which was strongly anti-Polish and in control of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and the Melnykes (OUN-M) which operated more closely with the Waffen-SS in Nazi murders of Jews, and after 1940 both were also fighting each other.

63 Timothy Snyder estimates a number of roughly 700,000; Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York 2010, 411.

64 Karel C. Berkhoff, The Mass Murder of Soviet Prisoners of War and the Holocaust. How Were They Related?, in: *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6 (2005) 4, 825-832.

65 Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair. Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule*, Cambridge/London 2004, 14; Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Polish Holocaust. Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*, London 1998, 16-18.

authors estimate much higher numbers.<sup>66</sup> Like communicating vessels, whenever Holocaust numbers drop, communist terror numbers tend to rise. Unfortunately, this seems strongly influenced by how violent pasts are used in the present politics of memory. In Belarus, for instance, the propagating of communist terror was hardly successful for a long time, though the death toll of the NKVD Kurapaty massacre near Minsk has been estimated at between 30,000 and 250,000 (the latter according to Norman Davis), its victims were supposedly buried in some 200 graves in the forest. Yet no more than five citizens from Kurapaty have been identified as victims, and truth-finding is hampered because no NKVD archives have been found.<sup>67</sup>

But can we trust documents? Strangely, most of our information concerning massacres is based on Nazi excavations of communist mass graves (1943) and Soviet investigations of Nazi massacres and camps (1944/1945). Yet, what do we actually know from such early research at a time of conflict? Such was the question posed by American Slavic scholar Irina Paperno who, in her work on the case of Vinnytsia, wondered about the uncritical use of 1943 German documents and photos handed to international war crime commissions. Because no subsequent forensic or archaeological research has been (or could be) carried out, post-war Ukrainian refugees in Canada, American historians and post-communist Ukrainian Memorial human rights activists alike have all relied heavily on these same, biased sources. To Paperno's astonishment, no one has ever questioned Nazi manipulation of the data in order to prove a 'Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy'; nor the neglect of actually discovered Jewish and Russian victims (mentioned in the original reports and traceable on silenced photos); nor the ethnic identification in Nazi sources of many of the suggested NKVD officers as Jews, in what she labels an "ethnic cleansing of evidence".<sup>68</sup> And yet, by revealing the NKVD massacres of Polish and Ukrainian citizens and the involvement of Jewish officers (evidenced by horrifying images of corpses captured in photographs, pamphlets, journals and cinema), the German war propaganda effectively silenced the already accomplished *Intelligenz-aktion* (secret extermination of Polish elites) and the genocide on five million Jews (by 1943), committed with the help of local nationalists. In doing so, it also successfully framed the unwanted past for Polish and Ukrainian people, with an effect that continues today.<sup>69</sup>

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66 The total number for 1941 (even excluding Katyn and later NKVD campaigns) has been estimated around 100,000 victims. See for instance the rather uncritical published source material, including ethnically biased Einsatzgruppen reports and US translated sources, in Ksenya Kiebusinski/Alexander Motyl (ed.), *The Great West Ukrainian Prison Massacre of 1941. A Sourcebook*, Amsterdam 2016.

67 Agnieszka Kamińska, 200 Thousand Nameless Victims of Stalin in Kurapaty, in: *Polskie Radio*, 15 November 2011, [http://focus.solidarityby.eu/page\\_200\\_thousand\\_nameless\\_victims\\_of\\_stalin\\_in\\_kurapaty\\_](http://focus.solidarityby.eu/page_200_thousand_nameless_victims_of_stalin_in_kurapaty_) (9 November 2016).

68 Irina Paperno, *Exhuming the Bodies of Soviet Terror*, in: *Representations* (2001) 74, 89-118, here 108.

69 See Milija Gluhovic, *Exhumations. The Return of the Dead in Tadeusz Kantor's 'Let the Artists Die' and Andrzej Wajda's 'Katyn'*, in: *Polish Theatre Perspectives* (2010) 1, 227-255.

Whereas these Western post-war reports and their uncritical use by scholars objectified Nazi propaganda, so to speak, new memory wars over those documents have been emerging on the Internet as well. Propagated by neo-Nazis suggesting an American-Jewish conspiracy to silence the ethnic component of Vinnytsia ('the Ukrainian Katyń'), they build upon claims that were actually quite close to the original, unedited German sources! As one of the cyber-militants argued almost 20 years ago: "The Jews own all of those media. And the Ukrainians don't own Hollywood, so they can't make movie dramas about Vinnitsa either, like Steven Spielberg does about the so-called 'Holocaust'."<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, this situation has completely changed in recent decades. In Ukraine, victims of Communism have since been constructed as victims of the Holodomor – the official term coined by diasporic Ukrainian scholars in the US and Canada, and subsequently enshrined in Ukrainian law as the 'Ukrainian Genocide' or 'Ukraine's Unknown Holocaust'. In what could be framed as a remarkable example of "long-distance nationalism",<sup>71</sup> it is also recognised in Canada by the Holodomor Memorial Day Act of 2008.<sup>72</sup> The thesis draws on Robert Conquest's pioneering *Harvest of Sorrow* from 1986, which, though strongly criticised for its use of sources and for setting far too high numbers, has become the academic legitimisation of the Holodomor as a planned act of genocide.<sup>73</sup>

The Holodomor paradigm claims that the Soviet collectivisation of private agriculture in 1932 and 1933 caused the death of seven to ten million Ukrainian citizens by ethnic famines (thus far outnumbering the six million Jewish Holocaust victims), although historical evidence suggests that 3.3 million people died from starvation in Ukraine and one million in Kazakhstan.<sup>74</sup> Notwithstanding the massive scale of the NKVD terror campaign, Stalin's deadly 'terror famine' could have been an unintended

70 William Pierce, *The Genocide at Vinnitsa, Our Race is our Nation*, based on the American Dissident Voices, broadcast, 13 June 1998, <http://library.flawlesslogic.com/vinnitsa.htm> (9 November 2017).

71 Benedict Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism*. World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics. The Wertheim Lecture, Amsterdam 1992; Per A. Rudling, Multiculturalism, memory and ritualisation: Ukrainian nationalist monuments in Edmonton, Alberta, in: *The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 39 (2011) 5, 733-768.

72 The preamble of the Canadian Holodomor law recognises the Ukrainian Famine as a genocide, "whereas the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide of 1932/1933 known as the Holodomor was deliberately planned and executed by the Soviet regime under Joseph Stalin to systematically destroy the Ukrainian people's aspirations for a free and independent Ukraine"; Holodomor Memorial Day Act, S.C.2008, c.19, Justice Laws Website, Government of Canada, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/U-0.4/page-1.html> (9 November 2016).

73 Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow. Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine*, New York 1986.

74 Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 411-412; David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains. Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine*, Budapest/New York 2007, 35-78. See also Christian Novack, *Holodomor and Gorta Mór. Famines, Historiographies and Memories in Ireland and Ukraine*, and Iryna Starovoyt, *From Holodomor to Maidan*, in: van der Laarse et al. (ed.), *Religion, State*, 219-240; and Lina Klymenko, *The Holodomor Law and National Trauma Construction in Ukraine*, in: *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 58 (2016) 4, 341-361.

result of unrealistic grain targets. Genocide in advance was, in fact, planned a decade later by Göring and Himmler by way of a radical collectivisation of Ukrainian agriculture, enforced in the Wehrmacht's ruthless strategy of killing by starvation after the 1941 German invasion and colonisation as part of *Generalplan Ost*. One wonders why the denial of this Nazi *Hungerplan* is not targeted in current Holodomor laws, as, in addition to the Holocaust, it would have led to tens of millions of dead planned in advance in former Galicia and West Ukraine (where the Holodomor myth is most popular now).<sup>75</sup>

Taking a cue from the Holocaust commemoration repertoire as early as the Orange Revolution, the Ukrainian parliament established the fourth Saturday of November as official National Liberation or Remembrance Day, while President Viktor Yushchenko declared the denial of the Holodomor punishable by law – a policy re-implemented under the 2015 Poroshenko administration.<sup>76</sup> Evoked already by Hitler, who since his victorious 1933 election campaign had referred to the Ukrainian famine and “the millions of people starving in a country that could be a breadbasket for the world” as proof of Marxism's evil intentions,<sup>77</sup> the ‘hidden’ Ukrainian hunger terror is exposed time and again as a trope of right-wing nationalists. For all its post-1991 canonisation in and by schoolbooks, monuments, remembrances, literature, testimonies, and popular culture both within and outside of Ukraine, the Holodomor continues to find its way into popular media culture as a “hidden truth”. It is along these same lines that American filmmaker Bobby Leigh promoted his Ukrainian TV series *Holodomor* (2008, DVD 2012) as a production about “the biggest lie, the best kept secret”, although the first Ukrainian TV documentary about the famine was broadcasted already during Gorbachev's glasnost. The impact of Holodomor in Ukraine is equivalent to that of the 1978 American mini-series *Holocaust* in the United States and Europe. Having raised the death toll beyond even the official figure, the series claimed that by the end of 1933, the famine genocide had claimed ten million Ukrainian lives (including three million children!) in just one

75 Although Göring's *Hungerplan* of ruthless starvation and colonisation was not completed before 1944, Snyder estimates a death toll of 4.2 millions Soviet citizens starved by German occupation. Berkhoff, in turn, concludes that “the Nazi regime ended the life of at least one million civilians and prisoner of war, either in the territory of the Reichskommissariat or, after deporting them, in the Reich”. Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 162-169 and 411; Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*, 307. See also Rob van der Laarse, *Fatal Attraction. Nazi Landscapes, Modernism, and Holocaust Memory*, in: Jan Kolen/Hans Renes/Rita Hermans (ed.), *Landscape Biographies*, Amsterdam 2015, 345-375.

76 Law of Ukraine №376-V On Holodomor of 1932/33 in Ukraine, Embassy of Ukraine to Canada, <http://canada.mfa.gov.ua/en/ukraine-%D1%81%D0%B0/holodomor-remembrance/holodomor-remembrance-ukraine/holodomor-law-ukraine> (9 November 2016). See also Georgiy Kasianov, *The Great Famine of 1932–1933 (Holodomor) and the Politics of History in Contemporary Ukraine*, in: [http://www.academia.edu/10250059/The\\_Great\\_Famine\\_of\\_1932-1933\\_Holodomor\\_and\\_the\\_Politics\\_of\\_History\\_in\\_Contemporary\\_Ukraine](http://www.academia.edu/10250059/The_Great_Famine_of_1932-1933_Holodomor_and_the_Politics_of_History_in_Contemporary_Ukraine) (16 August 2017); Jennifer Boryk, *Memory Politics. The Use of the Holodomor as a Political and Nationalistic Tool in Ukraine*; MA Thesis Central European University, Budapest, 2011.

77 Quoted in Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 61.



year: "HOLODOMOR will tell the story of the cold-blooded destruction of human life which has been silenced from the world for over seven decades."<sup>78</sup>

Just as post-Soviet Ukraine has been accused of erasing the memory of the Holocaust with the black-red Holodomor myth, Ukrainian and Canadian right-wing activists are currently accusing Russian and Israeli Holocaust *defenders* of erasing Holodomor memory.<sup>79</sup> In 2008, the Ukrainian Secret Service published a list of 19 Holodomor perpetrators, eight of which were Jewish, suggesting Judeo-communist support for the Ukrainian genocide.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, Russian-oriented Viktor Yanukovych supported the Holocaust paradigm, and even among Euromaidan activists there is a tendency to conflate the Holodomor and the Holocaust, if only to strengthen the double victimhood of Jews and Ukrainians – which, of course, is still a long way from recognising Ukrainian nationalists' perpetrator role in the Nazi crimes.<sup>81</sup> Hence, Europe's geopolitical shift may cause enormous problems in the EU's dealing with the past and its external relations with Israel, the United States, and neighbouring Russia, whose post-war national identity is still rooted in the antifascist myth of the Great Patriotic War.

78 Holodomor the Movie (2009), <http://gold-silver.us/forum/archive/index.php/t-60627.html?s=07eb13802143ac848eb3fd9bc7465f21>, Holodomorthemove.com (12 December 2016).

79 See Brandon Martinez, Russian State Media (Jews): 'Holodomor Never Happened, Holocaust Denial Should be Illegal', in: Non-Aligned Media, 9 February 2016, <https://freespeechtwentyfirstcentury.com/2017/01/16/russian-state-media-jews-holodomor-never-happened-holocaust-denial-should-be-illegal/comment-page-1/> (16 August 2017); The Three Holodomor Genocides, <https://holodomorinfo.com/> (9 November 2016).

80 SBU to name perpetrators of Holodomor and repression, in: Monthly Bulletin Prva Ludyny (Human Rights), 23 July 2008 (12 December 2016). John-Paul Himka noticed the name list in 2008, though observed its later disappearance. See John-Paul Himka, The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Ukraine, in: John-Paul Himka/Joanna Beata Michlic (ed.), Bringing the Dark Past to Light. The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe, Lincoln/London 2013, 626–662, here 651–652. The list is however still accessible at the Security Service website: Список партійних і радянських керівників, керівних співробітників ОДПУ та ДПУ УСРР, а також документів, що стали організаційно-правовою підставою для проведення в Україні політики Голодомору-Геноциду та репресій [List of Party and government leaders, senior staff GPU and GPU of the Ukrainian SSR and documents that became the legal basis for policies in the Ukraine Famine-Genocide and repression]; Служба безпеки України [Security Service Ukraine], <https://ssu.gov.ua/ua/pages/209> (12 December 2016).

81 See for instance Ingmar Oldberg, Both Victim and Perpetrator. Ukraine's Problematic Relationship to the Holocaust, in: Baltic Worlds, 1 August 2016, <http://balticworlds.com/ukraine%E2%80%99s-problematic-relationship-to-the-holocaust/> (9 November 2016). The article caused a considerable uproar amongst the readers. One web visitor commented: "Bullshit, Ukrainians are not guilty, and besides, Ukraine was ruled by Soviet Jews, so it [is] them who are guilty in that crime [meaning the Holodomor]", and another: "I as an Ukrainian fully believe the Jews have no place in Ukraine." Nevertheless, some commentators addressed the need to look into the past without prejudices, for instance the 'grandson of a murderer' of the First Galician SS Division who's unit killed 30,000 Poles and some Jews.



## Conclusion

Still under a post-1989 climate of reconciliation, Andrzej Wajda's film *Katyń* (2007) was the first to address Poland's double victimhood of Nazi and Soviet terror to a wider public.<sup>82</sup> Today, it is a standard Eastern European, anti-Russian paradigm. Yet *Katyń* was still successfully released on the Russian State Television at the eve of a shared Polish-Russian commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the Katyń massacre in April 2010, to which Russia's Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev invited his Polish colleague Donald Tusk. Made with support of nationalist Polish President Lech Kaczyński, Wajda's film was even re-broadcast in Russia after the fatal air crash in Smolensk that cost 96 high-ranking politicians their lives, including the president of Poland, who had been en route to Katyń to officially commemorate the victims of 1940 massacre. The crash was, in Prime Minister Tusk's prophetic words, the "most tragic Polish event since the war".<sup>83</sup> Soon afterwards, complot theories began to spread online about Moscow's planned murder of the Polish elite as "the second Katyń",<sup>84</sup> immediately followed by similar accusations from leading right-wing Polish politicians. After the 2015 elections, the right-wing government immediately re-opened the investigation of the Smolensk crash, already closed in 2014, building upon and further feeding the complot theory.<sup>85</sup> This could, in retrospect, be regarded as the beginning of the end of the European-Russian thaw following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Memory wars and paradigm shifts of this kind will never be resolved by top-down European declarations, memory laws or legal procedures, nor with memorial museums and media productions. Despite the intention to show people what actually happened, like the 1980s Jasenovac exhibition, films like *Katyn*, *Wolyn*, and *Holodomor* tend to decontextualise and isolate massacres from a genocidal perspective. In view of such mediated memory appropriations, even small conflicts about painful pasts trigger traumatic memories and run the risk of ending up in a clash of cultures, starting with Wikipedia wars.<sup>86</sup> This might happen not only in and among the new member states of East-

82 The script of Wajda's partly biographical movie was written with the author Andrzej Muralczyk, the author of *Katyń. Post Mortem* (2007), and which is directed both against Nazi and Soviet terror.

83 Ben Macintyre, 'In Dark Times Poland Needs the Sunlight of Truth', in: *The Times*, 13 April 2010, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/benmacintyre/article2491511.ece> (9 November 2016).

84 Dieter de Bruyn, 'From the Second Katyń to 'A Day without Smolensk'. Facebook Responses to the Smolensk Tragedy and its Aftermath', in: Ellen Rutten/Julia Fedor/Vera Zvereva (ed.), *Memory Conflicts and New Media. Web Wars in Post-Socialist States*, London/New York 2013, 228-237.

85 Poland to Re-Open Smolensk Case, in: *Radio Poland*, 1 December 2015, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/231062,Poland-to-reopen-Smolensk-case> (9 November 2016).

86 Russian and Ukrainian contributors to Wikipedia are providing in different language versions opposite, dogmatic, exclusive interpretations of Ukrainian history and the current Ukrainian conflict, which are not even discussed and problematised in edit wars; Mykhola Makhortych, *Identity, Memory and New Media. Inventing the History of Ukraine in Wikipedia*, in: Van der Laarse et al (ed.), *Religion, State, 241-260*.

ern Central Europe but also in “New Eastern Europe” (Ukraine and Belarus), sandwiched between the European Union and Russia. Many there take the Holocaust for a Western construct that completely ignores the long-lasting impact of Bolshevik terror and dictatorship on their societies from 1918 to 1989. Hence, to many (non-Jewish) people in Eastern Europe today, it isn’t the German SS or the Wehrmacht, but the Red Army that serves as the main symbol of oppression. This is made abundantly clear by the rise of new national remembrances and terror museums, such as the Riga Museum of the Occupation of Latvia 1939–1991,<sup>87</sup> and Vilnius’s Genocide Museum, where – in contrast to Bolshevik terror – the 70,000 Vilna Jews gunned down by Lithuanian and Nazi units in the nearby Ponary forest are hardly mentioned.

Obviously Holocaust dissonances affect not only Eastern European relations with Russia, or the relations between post-communist nations such as Poland and Ukraine, but also those between the East and the West. They do so in many ways and to varying degrees. To give but one example: In 2015, the Warsaw Katyn Museum opened as a branch of the State Polish Army Museum, which hosts a permanent exhibition of thousands of archaeological finds collected during several Polish archaeological expeditions at NKVD massacre sites near Smolensk. Although Russian territories and archives were opened to Polish researchers after Moscow politicians officially acknowledged Soviet responsibility for the Katyn massacre in 1990 (repeated several times up to 2010), objects discovered by archaeologists are to be permanently displayed in the Warsaw Citadel as a proof of Soviet crimes against humanity. In this way, the Katyn digs for the disappeared – coupled with the heroism of the failed Polish anti-Nazi revolt in 1944, on view at the Warsaw Rising Museum – feeds Poland’s national trauma politics of double victimhood. Considering the many Polish nametags from Russian territory now on display at the state museum in Warsaw, one wonders why not a single item of a young Dutch Holocaust victim can leave Polish territory at the request of a direct relative. Apparently, one’s own dead are different from others.

To conclude, I would like to argue that playing with the dead is never an innocent game. Forensic archaeologists and physical anthropologists may claim that “bones don’t lie”,<sup>88</sup> but human remains and belongings are by far the most tabooed, politicised and signified ‘evidence’ of Europe’s “age of extremes”.<sup>89</sup> The objectification of archaeological truth-finding should warn us that in the ‘hot’ conditions of (memory) wars, digging

87 Valters Nollendorf (ed.), *1940–1991 Latvia Under the Rule of the Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany*, Riga 2008; see also Jukka Rislakki, *The Case for Latvia. Disinformation Campaigns Against a small Nation*, Amsterdam/New York 2008.

88 See Jeff Guntzel, *The Bones Don’t Lie*. Forensic Anthropologist Clyde Snow Travels Continents to Bring the Crimes of Mass Murderers to Light, in: *The Independent Newsweek*, 30 July 2004, [http://natcath.org/NCR\\_Online/archives2/2004c/073004/073004a.php](http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2004c/073004/073004a.php) (9 November 2016); Katy Meyers Emery’s weblog, *Bones Don’t Lie*, <https://bonesdontlie.wordpress.com> (9 November 2016).

89 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*, London 1994.

deeper may reveal the reality, but it could just as easily feed new myths and ethnic hatred when used for public display in a one-sided narrative that may tell the truth, but not the whole truth. Archaeology and forensics already played a prominent role in public memory during the Holocaust. Revealing 'hidden truths' to people who are completely unaware of their violent pasts could easily set frozen conflicts back on fire. Like the hatred evoked among Polish and Ukrainian nationalists when confronted with Nazi photos of dead bodies, or Serbian nationalists when staring at the massacres of Ustaša butchers prior to the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, the deadly, violent other creates a climate for revenge. It is not true, after all, that material traces, photos, objects and human remains do not lie; they are markers of a time in conflict. Actually, many findings excavated under the spell of wartime propaganda still play a prominent role in memory narratives, and may easily become fuel for new ethnic hatred in Europe's current geopolitical context of competing memories. This re-ethnicising of the past calls for both a rethinking of the forensic turn in European memory and in memory studies. If only to keep history from repeating itself.